Moab children “travel the world” during Multicultural Mondays, where kids ages 6 to 12 play games, make crafts and learn a few foreign words and phrases each week.
The nine-week program is held at the Moab Valley Multicultural Center, 156 N. 100 West.

Children start off the first week on “common ground” in the United States, where everyone knows something about the USA, camp director and Americorps VISTA volunteer Katlyn Keane said.

“Kids make passports on the first day of camp, and get it stamped as we go to different countries,” she said.

There’s always a craft-making activity associated with the culture of a particular country. Last week, children learned about Brazil by making carnival masks, and putting on a parade to understand the significance of Brazil’s annual carnival celebration. Later that day, the group played soccer – a wildly popular sport in Brazil.

When kids arrive at Multicultural Mondays, camp leaders greet them by saying “welcome to (whatever country they’re visiting that day) in the language of that nation. The kids learn to say it as well.

When they “travel” to Ethiopia, the children will play a game where they will learn about the ibex, an endangered species there – and the natural resources that it depends on for survival, Keane said.

The first hour of Multicultural Mondays is spent outside in a moving game – before it gets hot – usually an activity that relates to the country the group is learning about that day. For example, for Brazil, kids formed a team and made stepping stones out of pieces of paper and pretended they were crossing the Amazon River. They had to communicate and help one another figure out how to get everyone across, Keane said.

The program is limited to 18 children per class, with three teachers to preserve a six to one ratio of children to adults. Kids can sign up for one, or as many countries as they want. In addition to the U.S., Germany, Ethiopia, and Brazil, children will “visit” Italy, Nepal, Canada, Australia and the Philippines.
When it comes time to study the Philippines, the group will go the community pool to simulate a “beach” experience, Keane said.

Multicultural Mondays also includes a trip to the Grand County Public Library, where, for an hour, kids can read, or listen to someone else read to them. Another option is to practice speaking Spanish during that time.

There are two Spanish clubs at Helen M. Knight Elementary School during the school year – clubs sponsored by the multicultural center and the BEACON Afterschool Program. Some of those students have continued their language learning in the summer with Multicultural Mondays, Keane said. A new topic is chosen each week at the library where kids practice out loud, simple phrases having to do with that theme.

“Some kids have gotten really good,” Keane said. “It’s been really fun.”

Sara Amarie’s two daughters, Natalie, 10, and Chloe, 9, are attending Multicultural Mondays for the second year.

“What I like is that they are learning and having fun at the same time,” Amarie said. “The ladies who teach the Multicultural Mondays are great. They’re friendly and awesome with the kids.”

Natalie said she likes learning about all the different countries – and was surprised to learn that the capital of Brazil is Brasília, not Rio de Janeiro – although Rio was the capital up until 1960 – long before Natalie was born.

“I like all the learning about different places,” she said. “I kind of want to go to all the different countries.”

Amarie said her daughters plan to attend all nine weeks of the camp.

“I like that it’s not just one week of activities, but spread through the whole summer,” Amarie said. “It helps them stay engaged in learning about the
Families who want to enroll their kids in Multicultural Mondays are encouraged to stop by the Multicultural Center, 156 N. 100 West, and register and sign up for the weeks they want to attend. Walk-ins are welcome as long as there is an opening.

Children learn about different countries during Multicultural Mondays

What: Multicultural Mondays for ages 6-12

When: Every Monday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., through Aug. 10 (except July 6)

Where: Moab Valley Multicultural Center, 156 North 100 West

Cost: $15 per day (scholarships available)

Information: 435-259-5444